

Town of Bloomfield
Economic Development Commission Meeting
800 Bloomfield Avenue, Conference Room #5
DRAFT MINUTES
MONDAY, April 18, 2016

Present: Jerry Long, Bonnie Bercowetz, Michelle Bononi, Fred Hesketh, and Jerry Katrichis, Richard McDermott

Also present: Director of Planning and Economic Development, José Giner; Don Poland; Rob Rowison; Nancy Haynes, Risk Manager; Roberta LaMonaca, Director of Library Services; Mark Weisman, Chair Prosser Library Building Committee; Lois Hager, Prosser Library Committee Member, Kevin Gough and Laura James, Recording Secretary

1. Chairman Long called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

2. **Public Comment**

No comments

3. **Discussion and possible recommendation regard the Library Building Study**

Chairman Long stated the Commission was there to discuss whether or not the Commission will make a recommendation of support to Town Council for referendum in November. The EDC is being asked to recommend if Prosser Library will remain at its present site or if we should build a new Library at another location.

Mr. Weisman stated the Town Council will make the decision of whether or not to go to the voters with a referendum for a new Library.

Commissioner Bercowetz stated the Commission will be looking at the economic impact on the various proposals the Library Committee has given.

Commissioner Hesketh stated the question on the table for consideration is does the Commission want to go ahead with the proposed rebuilding of Prosser Library and if so, what is the recommended location of the Library.

Mr. Weisman stated they are looking at three possible considerations, one of which is the existing site. This option would be an addition and renovation and involve acquiring the sites to the north for additional parking in order to accommodate the larger facility. The current Library is 22,000 square feet and the new library would be 36,000 square feet.

Mr. Weisman stated another proposal would be to build a brand new library on Town Hall site. There would be enough parking and could accommodate future shared parking.

The third option would be to build at 330 Park Avenue site in conjunction with new and renovated facility of the Human Services building. The 330 Park Avenue site is under a separate study but Mr. Weisman stated he is working cooperatively with the architect. Mr. Weisman stated if the Library goes to the Town Hall site or the 330 Park Avenue site the current Prosser Library would go up for sale and private development.

Mr. Weisman stated that the Commission should consider how they feel about the Library going up for sale for private development and its economic development impact.

There was discussion with Mr. Weisman and the Commissioners on whether the Library actually needs to go from the current 20,000 square feet to 36,000 square feet. Ms. LaMonaca spoke about the Library as a meeting place and spaces dedicated to children, teens and adults. Ms. LaMonaca stated that the current teen section can become disruptive with more than two

students. The new library prototype includes maker spaces where people come in to share knowledge, 3D printing. Studies find that there are scientists, engineers who visit the Library and work with patrons. The current staff room is a converted to study room which is used for study and lunch room for staff. Dedicated meeting space is needed. The Library is the place to go for online job seekers to get résumé development. Library patrons seek computers to apply for jobs online and the library staff assistant patrons with that effort.

Ms. LaMonaca stated that from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015, the Library had 131,547 visits, 164,700 items circulated, with a program attendance of 12,221. The usage attendance figures are limited because of the limited space the library has. She stated that the furniture has to be rearranged several times in a day for the different programming. The current space is very congested.

Ms. LaMonaca further stated the computer server room is not a temperature controlled locked space and also functions for staff mail boxes. This should be a dedicated and protected space. The Commissioners further discussed with Mr. Weisman if he had looked at another option with a lesser space than 36,000 square feet. Mr. Weisman stated he has not approached it that way. Mr. Weisman stated they looked at other spaces in Town that the Library could share, however there is only one shot at this in a lifetime and to make compromises and be disappointed on day one is not an option.

Commissioner Bononi asked if there are grants or other funding available. Commissioner Bononi stated over the past 15 to 20 years libraries are getting smaller not larger and based on demographics the higher the income the fewer visits to the library because they are more wired. Commissioner Bononi asked how does that foot traffic reduction affect the need for square footage. Ms. LaMonaca stated they see a cross section of the population. They probably see a high percentage of people who are on a lower socio-economic level. People who are renting DVD's, who are not downloading E-book's because they don't have a tablet. People coming in for assistance on computers. Prosser Library was built in 1963, therefore, they are starting with a smaller foot print to begin with. Some other libraries in surrounding Towns such as Avon, Windsor, Simsbury, they are not in 1960 buildings to begin with and they have built new buildings and added on space. There was further discussion regarding a need for the larger square footage and the evolution of libraries.

The Commissioners also discussed the lack of meeting spaces at the Library or at other Town facilities. Commissioner McDermott stated that Prosser Library does not have enough space and you don't want to build a library that doesn't have enough space. Commissioner McDermott stated it does not make sense to make cuts and have to come back in five years for an addition, it should be done right the first time. There was a consensus by the Commissioners that there is a need for the renovation of the existing library or for construction of a new library.

Mr. Giner stated the Town is putting in an investment in the Town center by offering a tax abatement to the Apartments that are coming to the Center of Town. He stated that if you move the Library out of the Center the Center will be losing that foot traffic going to the Library. There was further discussion regarding having the Library in the Town Center and its economic impact. Chairman Long asked what the Library Committee is recommending as to where the Library should be located.

Mr. Weisman stated the Committee is not unanimous but the majority feel the Town Hall site is the right solution. Mr. Weisman stated they are looking to present to Town Council by April 25, 2016.

Commissioner Katrichis stated his concern is should the Library be moved to another site, would the old facility site be left vacant for years, beside an empty hardware site. Mr. Weisman stated this has been a concern and the reason why Goman and York was asked to come on board as a

resource. Mr. Weisman stated he would like the Commission to advise the Town Council whether or not the Library should stay in Town Center. He also asked if the EDC would have a recommendation for the sale and redevelopment of Prosser should the existing Library be left vacant.

Mr. Giner stated the EDC was asked by the Library Committee to make a recommendation to the Town Council of the potential Library redevelopment. Mr. Don Poland stated there is not an anchor in the Town Center and he believes the Library is a part of that anchor and the Town Hall is a major anchor along with the Police Station, and Restaurants, therefore removing the Library from the Town Center is not what the Town Center needs.

Commissioner Hesketh made a motion to recommend that the Town Administration take the steps necessary to have a new Library in the Town Center. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bercowetz and passed.

Mr. Weisman stated his job is to make a recommendation to the Town Council. The Committee would like to have as many opinions as possible as to what will happen with Library at the existing site. Commissioner Long stated that would be considered when the time comes but they cannot make a recommendation as to where the Library should be located. Commissioner Bercowetz stated they cannot make a recommendation as to where in the Center of Town the Library should go at this point. The Commission further discussed all Town Hall buildings and the need for analysis and renovations survey. It was the consensus to defer the discussion on this to the next meeting.

4. Public Comment

Lois Hager, Ms. Hager stated the Library can get a grant up to \$1,000,000 if you reach a minimum square footage.

Kevin Gough, 5 Bear Ridge Drive, Mr. Gough stated that there is a need for an improvement in the Library, but questions the need for the library going from 20,000 to 30,000 square feet. The grant should be irrelevant because if you build a smaller space it would probably save millions of dollars.

5. Adjournment

Commissioner Bercowetz made a motion to adjourn at 10:00 a.m. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hesketh and passed unanimously.